

**Record Series #: 1121-113**

**Name:** W. W. Law sheet music and songbook collection  
**Dates:** 1893, 1903, 1912-1986, 1995, 1998, no date  
**Extent/Size:** 1.5 records cartons, 0.5 oversized box (2.0 cubic feet)  
**Language:** English

**Name of Creator(s):**

Westley Wallace Law (W. W. Law)

**Biographical History:**

W. W. Law (1923-2002) was a prominent Civil Rights leader, local historian, historic preservationist and community leader in Savannah, Georgia. Westley Wallace Law was born on January 1, 1923 in Savannah, Georgia, the oldest of three children of Geneva Wallace and Westley Law. He had two younger sisters, Dorothy Law, 1924-1975, and Tessie (Tessye) Law Sanders (1927- ). Law was greatly influenced by his mother, Geneva W. Law, grandmother, Lillie Belle Wallace, mentor, Reverend Ralph Mark Gilbert, and scoutmaster, John S. Delaware. Both Reverend Gilbert and John Delaware were officials in the Savannah chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Law joined the NAACP Youth Council in high school and later served as its president. He attended Georgia State Industrial College (now Savannah State University) before being drafted into the U. S. Army during World War II. After he completed his military service, he finished his bachelor's degree in biology. Law was a long-time boy scoutmaster for Troop 49 which was made up of boys from First Bryan Baptist Church, of which he was a member and Sunday school teacher. He was a mail carrier for the United States Postal Service for over forty years.

From 1950-1976 Law served as President of the Savannah chapter of the NAACP. During the 1960s, he led weekly mass meetings at Bolton Street Baptist Church and St. Philip A.M.E. Church during which he urged "passive resistance to segregation" and nonviolent protests. He was involved in efforts to desegregate Grayson Municipal Stadium, department store lunch counters on Broughton Street, and the beaches at Tybee Island. He led an eighteen-month boycott of Broughton Street merchants. Law is largely credited for helping to keep Savannah's Civil Rights movement more peaceful than those in other southern cities. In 1961, he was fired from his postal job because of his Civil Rights activities, but reinstated after national NAACP leaders and President John F. Kennedy came to his defense.

After finishing his run as NAACP president, he focused his efforts on preserving Savannah African American History. He established the Savannah-Yamacraw Branch of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH), the King-Tisdell Cottage Museum, Beach Institute African American Cultural Center, the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, and the Negro Heritage Trail Tour. He also helped bring attention to and preserve Laurel Grove South Cemetery, the City's historically African American municipal cemetery.

Law received honorary doctorates from the Savannah College of Art & Design and Savannah State University. He was honored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation for his preservation efforts in the community. W. W. Law died on July 28, 2002 at his home in Savannah. He willed his home and belongings to

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Remer K. Pendergraph who formed the W. W. Law Foundation to celebrate and continue the work of W. W. Law.

*For more information on W. W. Law see:*

Elmore, Charles J. "W. W. Law (1923-2002)." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last updated, 24 August 2020. (available online at <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/w-w-law-1923-2002>).

*Scope & Content:*

The W. W. Law sheet music and songbook collection (1893, 1903, 1912-1986, 1995, 1998, no date) contains notated music in various formats including sheet music, full scores, librettos, songbooks, and instructional music books. The music genres represented span African American spirituals, operas, cantatas, popular music, sacred, and Christmas music. Songbooks include patriotic, popular, community and camp songs. Instructional music books in this collection include manuals for ukulele and piano. Notable African American composers, arrangers, lyricists, and editors are found throughout these works. Most notable of these contributors are Langston Hughes, Reverend Ralph Mark Gilbert, Hall Johnson, Harry T. Burleigh, Lena J. McLin, Ulysess Kay, and R. Nathaniel Dett. One sheet music of significance is for a song featuring a popular holiday in Savannah titled "It's Saint Patrick's Day in Savannah" by A. J. Handiboe, performed by Eddie Daly and the United States Marine Band, published in 1953.

*System of Arrangement & Ordering:*

The W. W. Law sheet music and songbook collection (1893, 1903, 1912-1986, 1995, 1998, no date) is physically arranged by item number.

The following inventories are available and are keyword searchable:

[Inventory by Item Number](#)

[Inventory by Contributors](#)

[Inventory by Title](#)

[Inventory by Date](#)

*Conditions Governing Access:*

Collection is stored offsite and researchers must request desired records at least one (1) full business day before research appointment for access.

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***Related Collections:***

Record Series 1121-105, W. W. Law Music collection. City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

Record Series 1121-107, W. W. Law Book collection. City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

***Access Points:***

African Americans--Music

Boatner, Edward

Burleigh, H. T. (Harry Thacker), 1866-1949

Camp songs

Choral music

Christmas carols

Dawson, William L. (William Levi), 1899-1990

Dett, R. Nathaniel, 1882-1943

First African Baptist Church (Savannah, Ga.)

Gospel Music

Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967

Hymns

Johnson, Hall, 1888-1970

Johnson, James Weldon, 1871-1938

Joplin, Scott, 1868-1917

Kay, Ulysses, 1917-1995

King, Betty Jackson, 1928-1994

Law, Geneva Wallace, 1900-1994

Law, W. W. (Westley Wallace), 1923-2002

McLin, Lena J. (Lena Johnson), 1928-

Music--Instruction and Study

Music by African American composers

Operas--Librettos

Songbooks

Spirituals (Songs)

Still, William Grant, 1895-1978

United States. Army--Songs and music

Whalum, Wendell

**1121-113 GSM-gau (USMARC)**

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**City of Savannah, Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia [GSG (OCLC/LYRASIS)]**

**Record Series 1121-113, W. W. Law sheet music and songbook collection (1893, 1903, 1912-1986, 1995, 1998, no date)**

Work, John W. (John Wesley), 1901-1967

*Sponsors/Funding:*

Chatham County, Georgia, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funding.

*Preferred Citation:*

Record Series 1121-113, W. W. Law sheet music and songbook collection. City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

*Processed by:*

M. Kerkhoff, October 2020.